conference. No, we shall beat them by merely temporizing. They want food already. They will be ten times worse off in a week."

"Ah, yes! Good heavens! I know it will end in that way; but it is not they who haunt me with the most wounding reproaches—"

"I understand; you mean to allude to the recollections perpetually revived by these three gentlemen. However, we have them safe in prison and they are just sufficiently culpable for us to keep them in prison as long as is convenient to us. One, only, is still not in our power, and braves us. But, devil take him! we shall soon succeed in sending him to join his companions. We have accomplished more difficult things than that. In the first place, I have, as a precaution, shut up, at Rueil, near me, under my own eyes, within reach of my hand, the two most intractable ones. To-day the third will be there also."

"As long as they are in prison all will be well," said Anne; "but one of these days they will get out."

"Yes; if your Majesty releases them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Anne, following the train of her own thoughts on such occasions; "one regrets Paris!"

"Why so?"

"On account of the Bastile, sir, which is so strong and so secure."

"Madame, these conferences will bring us peace; when we have peace we shall regain Paris; with Paris, the Bastile, and our three bailies shall rot therein."

Anne frowned slightly, when Mazarin, in taking leave, kissed her hand.

Mazarin, after this half humble, half gallant attentation, went away. Anne followed him with her eyes, and as he withdrew, at every step he took, a disheartened smile was seen playing, then gradually burst upon her lips.

"I once," she said, "desired the love of a Cardinal who never said 'I shall do,' but 'I have done.' Thus man knew of retireals more secure than Rueil—darker and more silent even than the Bastile. Oh, the degenerate world!"

CHAPTER LXXX.

PRECAUTIONS.

After quitting Anne, Mazarin took the road to Rueil, where he usually resided; in those times of disturbance he went about with numerous followers, and often disguised himself. In the military dress he was, indeed, as we have before stated, a very handsome man.

In the court of the old château of St. Germain, he entered his coach, and reached the Seine at Chatillon. The prince had supplied him with fifty light horse, not so much by way of a guard, as to show the deputies how readily the queen's generals dispersed their troops, and to prove that they might be scattered about at pleasure. Alice, on horseback, without his sword, and kept in sight by Comminges, followed the Cardinal in silence. Grimard, finding that his
master had been arrested, fell back into the ranks, near Arnais, without saying a word, and as if nothing had happened.

Grimal had, indeed, during twenty-two years of service, seen his master extricate himself from so many difficulties that nothing made him uneasy.

At the branching off of the road toward Paris, Arnais, who had followed in the Cardinal’s suite, turned back. Mazarin went to the right hand, and Arnais could see the prisoner disappear at the turning of the avenue. Athos, at the same moment, marvelled by a similar impulse, looked back also. The two friends exchanged a simple inclination of the head, and Arnais put his finger to his hat, as if to bow; Athos, alone, comprehending by that signal that he had some project in his head.

Ten minutes afterward Mazarin entered the court of that château which his predecessor had built for him at Rouen; as he alighted, Comminges approached him.

"My lord," he asked, "where does your Eminence wish Monsieur Comte de la Fere to be lodged?"

"Certainly in the pavilion of the orangery—in front of the pavilion where the guard is. I wish every respect shown to the count, although he is the prisoner of her Majesty the queen."

"My lord," answered Comminges, "he begs to be taken into the place where Monsieur d’Artagnan is confined—that is, in the hunting lodge, opposite the orangery." Mazarin thought for an instant, Comminges saw that he was undecided.

"This is a very strong post," he resumed, "and forty good men, tried soldiers, and consequently having nothing to do with Pronges, nor any interest in the Pronges."

"If we put these three men together, Monsieur Comminges," said Mazarin, "we must double the guard, and we are not rich enough in defenders to commit such acts of prodigality."

Comminges smiled; Mazarin read, and construed that smile.

"You do not know these men, Monsieur Comminges, but I know them—first, personally; also, by hearsay. I sent them to carry aid to King Charles, and they performed prodigies to save him; had it not been for an adverse destiny, that beloved monarch would, this day, have been among us."

"But since they serve your Eminence so well, why are they, my lord Cardinal, in prison?"

"In prison?" asked Mazarin; "and when has Rouen been a prison?"

"Ever since there were prisoners in it," answered Comminges.

"These gentlemen, Comminges, are not prisoners," returned Mazarin, with his ironical smile, "but guests; and guests so precious, that I have put a guard before each of their windows, and bolts to their doors, that they may not be weary of being my visitors. So much do I esteem them, that I am going to make the Count de la Fere a visit, that I may converse with him tête-à-tête; and that we may not be disturbed at our interview, you must conduct him, as I said before, into the pavilion of the orangery, that, you know, is my daily promenade."

Comminges bowed, and returned to Athos the result of his request. Athos, who had been awaiting the Cardinal's decision
with outward composure, but secret uneasiness, then entreated that
Comminges would do him one favor, which was, to intimate to
D'Artagnan that he was placed in the pavilion of the orangerie for
the purpose of receiving a visit from the Cardinal, and that he should
profit by the opportunity in order to ask for some mitigation of their
close imprisonment.

"Which cannot last," interrupted Comminges, "the Cardinal
said so; there is no prison here."

"But there are mitigations!" replied Athos, smiling.

"Oh, that's a different thing: yes—I know there are traditions of
that sort," said Comminges; "it was in the time of the other Car-
dinal, who was a great nobleman; but our Mazarin—impossible! an
Italian adventurer could not go to such lengths to ward such men as
cardinels. Outbuildings are employed as a means of kingly vengeance,
and a low-born fellow such as he is dare not have recourse to them.
No, no, be easy on that score. I shall, however, inform Monsieur
d'Artagnan of your arrival here."

Comminges then led the count to a room on the ground floor of a
pavilion, at the end of the orangerie. They passed through a court-
yard as they went full of soldiers and courtiers. In the center of
this court, in the form of a horn-shoe, were the buildings occupied
by Mazarin, and at each wing the pavilion (or smaller building)
where D'Artagnan was, and that, level with the orangerie, where
Athos was to be. Behind each end of these two wings extended the
park.

Athos. when he reached his appointed room, observed, through
the gratings of his window, walls, and roofs; and was told, on in-
quiry, by Comminges, that he was looking on the back of the
pavilion where D'Artagnan was confined."

"Yes, 'tis too true," said Comminges, "'tis almost a prison; but
who's the jailer? The rich is of yours count—you, who are the very
flower of our nobility—to guard, spend your valor and your loyalty
amongst these upstarts, the Frondeurs! Really and truly, if ever I
thought that I had a friend in the ranks of the royal army, it was
you. A Frondeur! you, the Count de la Fere, on the side of Brou-
sel, Blanconot, and Violer! For shame! you, a Frondeur!"

"On my word of honor," said Athos, "one must be either a
Mazarinist or a Frondeur. For a long time I had these words whis-
pered in my ears, and I chose the last: at any rate, it is a French
word. And now, I am a Frondeur—not of Broussel's party, nor
of Blanconot's nor am I with Violer—but with the Duke de Beau-
fort, the Duc de Bouillon and d'Elbeuf; with princes, not with
presidents, counselors, and low-born lawyers. Besides, what a
chance there is to serve the Cardinal! Look at that wall—without a single window— which tells you fine things
about Mazarin gratitude!!"

"Yes," replied de Comminges, "more especially if that could
reveal how Monsieur d'Artagnan for this last week has been a-
serving at him."

"Poor D'Artagnan," said Athos, with that charming melancholy
which was one of the external traits of his character. "so brave, so
good, so terrible to the enemies of those whom he loves; you have
two unruly prisoners there, sir."
"Unruly," Comminges smiled; "you wish to make me afraid, I suppose." When he came here, Monsieur D'Artagnan provoked and braved all the soldiers and inferior officers, in order, I suppose, to have his sword back—that mood lasted some time—but now, he's as gentle as a lamb, and sings Gasson songs, which makes one die with laughing."

"And Du Vallon?" asked Athos.

"Ah, he's quite another sort of person—a formidable gentleman, indeed. The first day he broke all the doors in, with a single push of his shoulder, and I expected to see him leave Paris, in the same way as Samson left Gaza. But his temper cooled down like his friend's—he not only gets used to his captivity, but jokes about it."

"So much the better," said Athos; and, on reflection, he felt convinced that this improvement in the spirits of the two captives proceeded from some plan formed by D'Artagnan for their escape.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

STRENTH AND SAGACITY.

Now let us pass the orangery, to the hunting-lodge. At the extremity of the court-yard, where close to a portico formed of four columns, there were dog kennels, rose an oblong building, the pavilion of the orangery, a half-circle, inclosing the court of honor. It was in this pavilion, on the ground-floor, that D'Artagnan and Porthos were confined, suffering the hours of a long imprisonment in a manner suitable to each different temperament.

D'Artagnan was walking about like a tiger, his eye fixed growling as he paced along by the bars of a window looking upon the yard of servants' offices.

Porthos was ruminating over an excellent dinner which had been served up to him.

The one seemed to be deprived of reason, yet he was meditating. The other seemed to meditate, yet he was sleeping. But his sleep was a nightmare, which might be guessed by the incoherent manner in which he snored.

"Look," said D'Artagnan, "day is declining. It must be nearly four o'clock. We have been in this place nearly eighty-three hours."

"Hem!" muttered Porthos, with a kind of pretext of answering.

"Did you hear, eternal sleeper?" cried D'Artagnan, irritated that any one could doze during the day, when he had the greatest difficulty in sleeping during the night.

"What?" said Porthos. "I say we have been here eighty three hours,"

"'Tis your fault," answered Porthos.

"How, my fault?"

"Yes, I offered to you escape,"

By tearing down an iron bar, and pushing in a door, Porthos. People like us cannot just go out as they like; besides, going out of this room is not everything."